

Deuteronomy 19 - Thursday, October 6th, 2011

(1) "When the LORD your God has cut off the nations whose land the LORD your God is giving you, and you dispossess them and dwell in their cities and in their houses, (2) you shall separate three cities for yourself in the midst of your land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

- Moses is again addressing the cities of refuge which we studied in great detail back in Numbers 35. Here, he's following up on this command.
- This now deals with the three additional cities of refuge which could not yet be built because they were to be established in the Promised-Land.
- There were to be a total of six cities of refuge, three of which were to be on the East side of the Jordan river, and the other three on the West.

Numbers 35:9-12 NKJV Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (10) "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, (11) then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there. (12) They shall be cities of refuge for you from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment.

- For the benefit of those who weren't with us for this study, I'll fill in some blanks related to what the purpose was for having these cities of refuge.
- In those days, the law and order of the day, was that you had to take the law into your own hands and avenge the murder of a family member.
- The cities of refuge were God's protection for any man who, in the case of an accidental death, isn't killed before his case was brought to a trial.

"The Israelites, in common with other nations, had among them the institution of blood-revenge, by which the nearest relative was bound to revenge a man's death. To meet the evils connected with this deep-seated custom, places were appointed to which the man-slayer might flee, and be secure till the time came for a fair trial."

Charles Spurgeon

- The question becomes, why is it that Moses reiterates this here at this juncture, and why do they need to be reminded of the importance of this?
- It's here again mentioned for what are considered practical reasons, in that only three of the six cities of refuge could be appointed prior to this.
- While they could not yet appoint the other three, on the other side of the Jordan, they could at least see to it that the first three were completed.

- I don't want us to miss a valuable life lesson that's woven into the fabric of what could be deemed a seemingly nebulous and redundant detail.
- Here's what I'm thinking; "if we are unable to carry out all that God has called us to do, we can at least carry out and do, what we're able to do."
- Another way to say the same thing is; "just because you can't do everything God has told you to do, doesn't mean you sit idly by until you can."

- We do this to our own peril in the sense that waiting for all our ducks to be in a row excuses our laziness in being busy about the things of God.
- There's another side to this, in a two-fold way, in that, not only does this laziness show up at the front end, it shows up on the tail end as well.
- We not only excuse our laziness under the banner of not being able to do everything, we also use it to excuse not following through on anything.

- It's important to remember that Moses will not enter the Promised-Land with this generation of Israelites who are only days away from going in.
- It's for this reason that Moses must follow through and follow up as it were, in order to see to it that they do all God has commanded them to do.
- Back in Deuteronomy chapter four, we saw how that Moses would do just that and set apart the first three cities on the East side of the Jordan.

Deuteronomy 4:41-43 (41) Then Moses set apart three cities on this side of the Jordan, toward the rising of the sun, (42) that the manslayer might flee there, who kills his neighbor unintentionally, without having hated him in time past, and that by fleeing to one of these cities he might live: (43) Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.

- Since these first three were completed, it's now time for the second three to be completed once they dispossess the land of those other nations.
- After they dispossess the land of the other nations, and possess the land as a nation, they must follow through on these three cities of refuge.
- Not only were these cities to be built, they were to also have well built and well maintained roads for anyone accused of second degree murder.

(3) You shall prepare roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, that any manslayer may flee there. (4) "And this *is* the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time past— (5) as when *a man* goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he shall flee to one of these cities and live; (6) lest the avenger of blood, while his anger is hot, pursue the manslayer and overtake him, because the way is long, and kill him, though he *was* not deserving of death, since he had not hated the victim in time past. (7) Therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall separate three cities for yourself.'

- Moses is providing some of the details that would warrant the fleeing to one of these cities of refuge by using an example of accidental death.
- The scenario Moses gives is two men going out to chop wood. The axe head flies off the handle of one man, and ends up killing the other man.
- Until this man was found to be not guilty of first degree, premeditated murder, he was protected by fleeing to one of these three cities of refuge.
- Maybe now the question becomes, did Israel actually do this once they were in the Promised-Land. We see in the book of Joshua that they did.

Joshua 20:7-8 NKJV So they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and Kirjath Arba (which *is* Hebron) in the mountains of Judah. (8) And on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness on the plain, from the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh.

- What's interesting is that three of the six cities of refuge on the other side of the Jordan were for only two and a half of the tribes who were there.
- The other three cities of refuge were for the other nine and a half tribes who crossed over the Jordan, meaning that it would be disproportionate.
- This is answered in the following verses, but suffice it to say for now, though unequally distributed these cities were only a one day travel away.

Adam Clarke - "The cities of refuge were distributed through the land at proper distances from each other that they might be convenient to every part of the land; and it is said they were situated on eminences, that they might be easily seen at a distance, the roads leading to them being broad, even, and always kept in good repair."

Charles Spurgeon - "Theses were chosen on each side of the river, that a refuge might be accessible to every man; even so is Jesus a Savior freely presented to all who desire him. The roads were repaired, and hand posts set up to direct fugitives, and thus the gospel is made plain, so that he who runs may read."

(8) "Now if the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as He swore to your fathers, and gives you the land which He promised to give to your fathers, (9) and if you keep all these commandments and do them, which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and to walk always in His ways, then you shall add three more cities for yourself besides these three, (10) lest innocent blood be shed in the midst of your land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance, and *thus* guilt of bloodshed be upon you.

- Moses takes this to the next level and addresses the matter of additional cities, if in their obedience, God enlarges their territory with more land.
- This would indicate that they were to insure three more cities were added proportionate to the amount of land that was added to their territories.
- You sort of get the impression, God takes this very seriously, and is making every provision to insure that this refuge is available to everyone.

(11) "But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, rises against him and strikes him mortally, so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, (12) then the elders of his city shall send and bring him from there, and deliver him over to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. (13) Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall put away *the guilt of* innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you.

- Now Moses is addressing the matter of premeditated first degree murder, where instead of an accidental death, one flees to a city of refuge.
- In the event one claims to be innocent of committing a murder, when in fact he's guilty, he's to be brought out of that city of refuge and killed.
- Furthermore, they were not to feel sorry for him, rather, they were to "put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel," so God could bless them.

- There's something here in these verses that we need to know because it will become germane to our understanding of why this is not harsh.
- There's a Biblical distinction between killing and murdering someone. While murdering is killing, killing is not necessarily the same as murdering.
- The sixth commandment in Exodus 20:13 does not say; "you shall not kill," it says; "you shall not murder." We see this difference in verse 11.

- Moses is talking about one found guilty when, by virtue of his anger and hatred, he uses a weapon, which shows it was premeditated murder.
- In this case, the murderer was to be brought out of the city of refuge, and be put to death because it was not a case of an accidental death.

- Be that as it may, and suffice it to say, all of this paints a beautiful picture on the canvass of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.
- Jesus Christ is our City of Refuge! He is our High Priest! He is who we flee to, and are both safe and saved by His life and freed by His death.

Hebrews 6:18 NKJV that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.

A SCRIPTURE PICTURE OF JESUS CHRIST

1. The cities of refuge were a place where one could be saved from death
2. They were provided divinely by God Himself as a place of refuge for all who would come.
3. It was for any and all who would come, Jew and Gentile alike.
4. Everyone had access to these cities of refuge.
5. When one fled to the city of refuge, they were safe and secure.
6. All six cities of refuge were made known to all.
7. The one who fled was only kept safe in the city by the life of the High Priest.
8. Freedom only comes vis-a-vis the death of this High Priest.
9. The cities of refuge were for one who was pronounced innocent.

Charles Spurgeon - "God provided no sanctuary for real guilt, murder was not winked at, else had the land become both polluted and unsafe. Mercy to murderers would be cruelty to the innocent. It was accidental or unpremeditated killing which here found shelter. The spiritual fact, however, far excels the type, for in Jesus, the real sinner finds pardon and safety."

(14) "You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark, which the men of old have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that it sets in place a very important principle related to removing boundaries.
- The application of this verse has ramifications both physically and spiritually, in how it speaks first to the right to ownership of personal property.
- Not only was it not to be removed, but the boundaries which the men of old have set, were not to be moved, which is actually what we see now.

- I would suggest that with the geopolitical move towards globalism and socialism, the seizing of personal property may soon become the norm.
- In the arena of the church it isn't so much the removing of the boundaries, it's more so the moving of the boundaries that the men of old had set.
- What I mean by this is that in order for there to be a global uniting of world religions, the boundaries of old will have to be moved in order to do it.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 NIV For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. (4) They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

(15) "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established. (16) If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, (17) then both men in the controversy shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. (18) And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, *if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother,*

- Woven into the fabric of these two verses is a very crucial principle, and one for which we would do well to take note of in its application to us.
- Here, God is once again establishing the testimony of two or more witnesses, as one witness is insufficient in judging a man guilty of murder.
- This speaks not only to the physical act of murder, but the spiritual act of assassinating someone's character by accusations and slandering.

One commentator said it best when they wrote how that; "God is concerned about the murder of reputation, as well as physical murder, and commands Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19) - the same standard as for proving murder! Remember 1 Timothy 5:19 does not say "except from two or three gossips"; it says except from two or three witnesses. If a matter is false, it does not become true because many people hear it or many people repeat it."

(19) then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. (20) And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. (21) Your eye shall not pity: life *shall be* for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

- Moses addresses what to do in the event of a false accusation by telling them to do to the accuser what would have been done to the accused.
- In other words, if someone falsely accused a man of murder, he received the death penalty as if he committed murder. Can you say; Haman.
- It's interesting to note how they weren't to go beyond that which was equal to the crime committed. It was only to be one eye for an eye, not two.